

Northeast Montana Weather Summary for the Winter of 2005-2006

December averaged near normal in both temperature and precipitation. There were alternating warm and cold spells, in general starting the month cold, but then ending warm for the last 10 days. The coldest weather brought many lows to -20 or colder on the 5th and the 7th. Jordan and Opheim 12 SE both hit -30, followed by -28 at Nashua and Content 3SSE. During this time, there were numerous locations that had a day or two with highs that were below zero as well, the coldest -10 for a high at Nashua. Warmest temperatures reported occurred late in the month, led by Flatwillow's 61 on the 24th, 60 at Zortman and 57 at Content 3SSE on the 25th.

Precipitation varied a lot with at least 15 locations having .50 inch or more, led by 1.06 at Carlyle, and 1.00 at Zortman and Grassrange 13NE. Yet 7 stations came in with less than a tenth of an inch, including 3 that had only a trace: Mosby, Hinsdale 21 SW, and Bloomfield 9NNE. Snowfall was fairly well spread through the month with no real heavy amounts. The most significant snows occurred around the 3rd, the 14th to 16th, and on the 29th. These systems produced 1 to 4 inches of snow at numerous locations. The system on the 14-16th produced 6.5 inches at Carlyle, while Jordan had 5 inches from the system on the 29th.

Total snowfalls for the month were led by 14.5 inches at Zortman, 14.0 at Flatwillow, and 13.0 at Lindsay.

The warm weather of the last ten days of December continued throughout the month of January, making it about 15 degrees above normal, and the warmest January on record at nearly all locations. Highs were above freezing on most days. In fact, every day of the month at Glendive and Flatwillow were above freezing. Most stations did not have a below zero reading all month. Only 8 stations dropped below zero, led by -13 at Westby, and -12 at Redstone, and -10 at Plentywood, all between the 20th and 22nd. Zortman had the warmest reading for January with an amazing 69 degree high on the 26th. Mosby, Flatwillow, and Content 35S also hit the 60s. Numerous relatively rare overnight lows that were above freezing occurred too. Flatwillow had a low of 46 on the 2nd, and Zortman had 45 on the 7th.

Precipitation averaged near normal, but with typically large variations. Seven locations had more than .50 inch for the month; however 10 stations had under a tenth of an inch, and 4 places had only a trace for the whole month: Circle 17NW, Jordan, Plentywood, and Terry. The most was 1.02 at Port of Raymond, .76 at Whitewater, and .75 at Port of Morgan..

The most significant snowfalls for the month occurred between the 19th and 22nd. During this time, Opheim 12 SE picked up 10 inches of snow, 9 inches fell at Glasgow 14NW, 7 at Port of Morgan, and 6 at Redstone and Scobey 4NW. Port of Morgan led all stations with 11.0 inches total snowfall for the month.

The unusually long spell of warm weather that dominated most of the winter, continued the first half of February. Before the weather turned colder on the 16th and 17th, temperatures had been running above normal every day for more than 50 days in a row. Although the last half of the month was colder than normal, the bitter cold of the 17th was very shortlived. On the 17th, many locations dropped to -20 or colder. Opheim 12SE was the coldest, reporting a low of -31. Zortman had -29, with -28 at Westby, Redstone, and Opheim 10N. Numerous locations also had below zero highs on the 17th too, led by -8 at Westby, and -6 at Medicine Lake. Warmest temperatures were scattered around the month, and included 68 at Flatwillow, 65 at Mosby, and 63 at Jordan and Cohagen.

Precipitation again averaged near normal with lots of variation. While 10 sites had over .50 inch of precip, 7 had under a tenth inch, including only traces at Plentywood and Port of Raymond. The most was .99 at Hinsdale 4SW, and .97 at Glasgow. The last day of the month produced an unusually heavy rainfall for February, with over 6 tenths of an inch at Glasgow and Scobey 4NW.

Most of the months' snowfall came from back to back storms on the 22nd to the 24th. Flatwillow received 10 inches from these storms, Malta 7E and Sidney 8 inches, 7 at Malta and Vida 6NE, 6 at Winnett 12SW, Brockton 20S, Hinsdale 4SW, and Dodson. 3-5 inch totals were very common elsewhere. Snowfall totals for the entire month of February were led by 14.0 inches at Flatwillow, 13.0 at Zortman, and 12.6 inches and Hinsdale 4SW.